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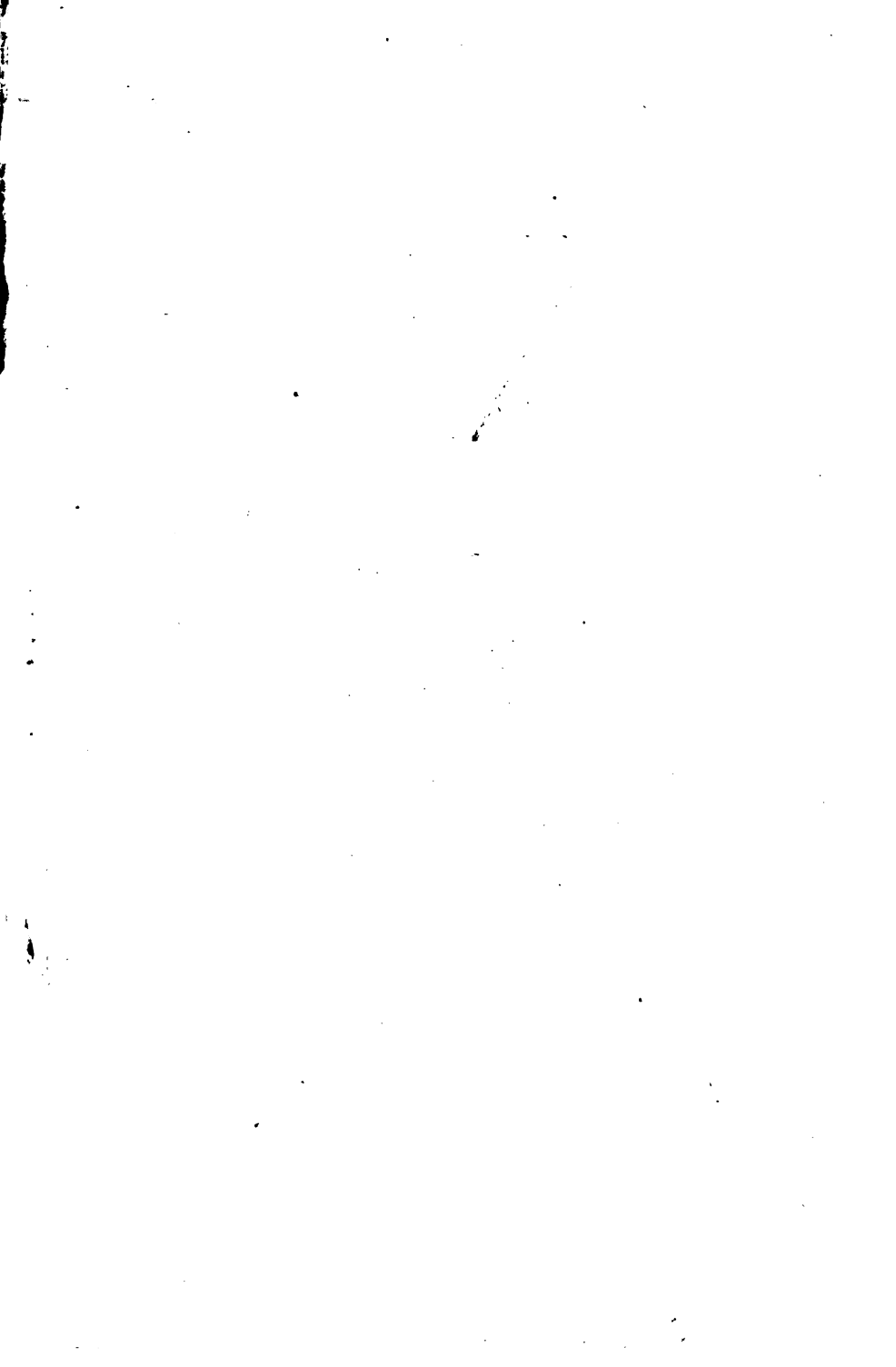


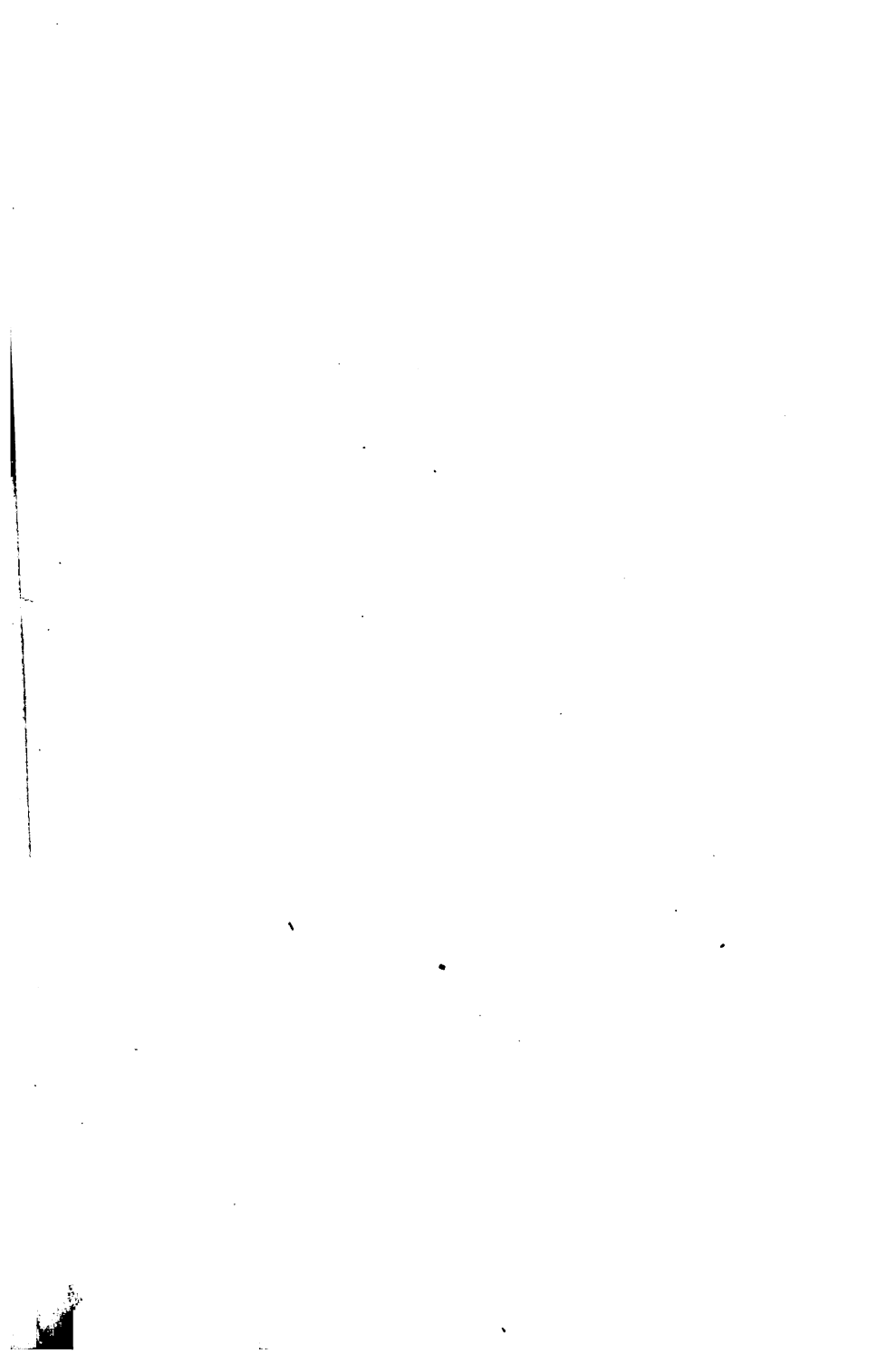
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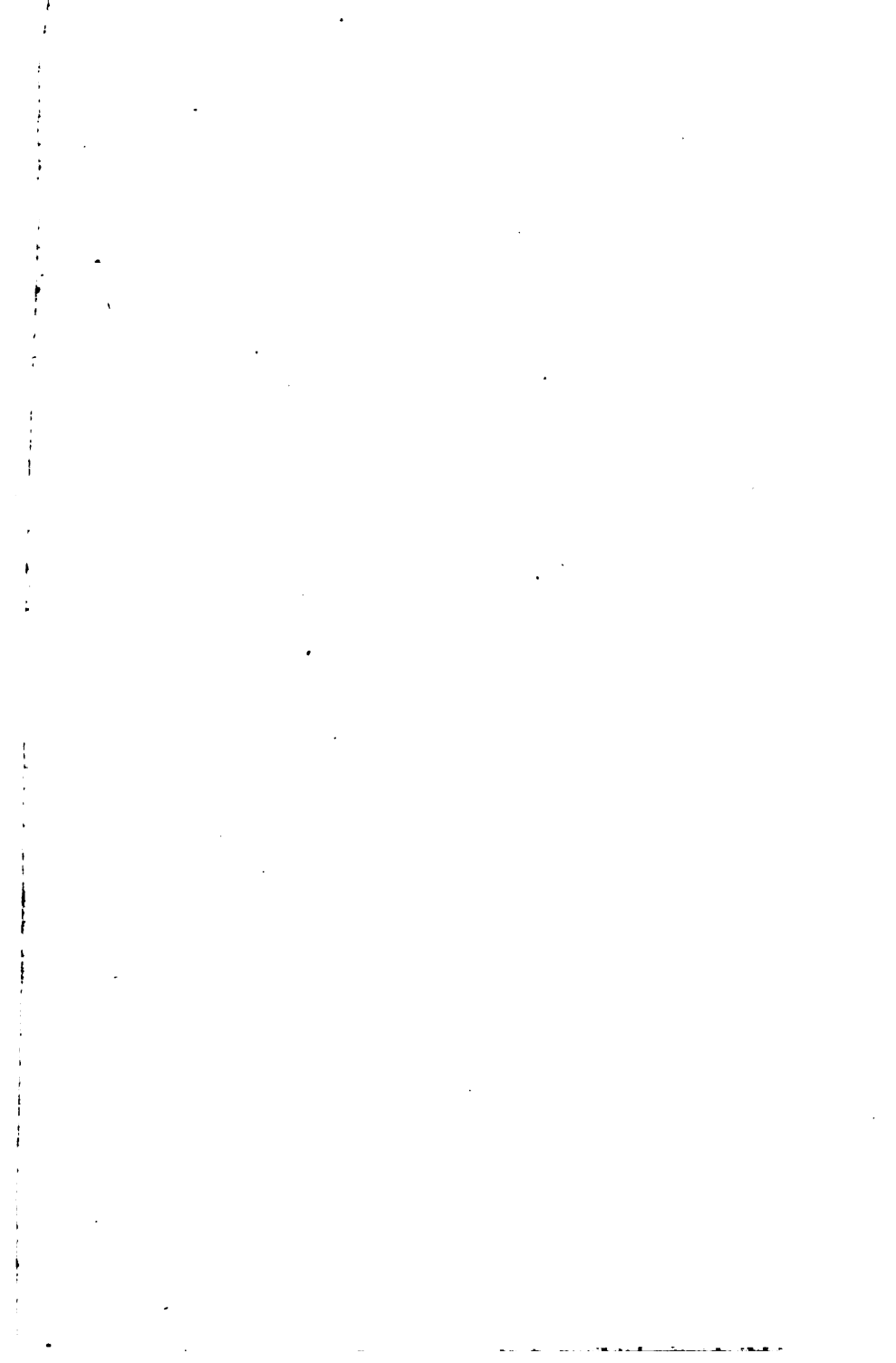
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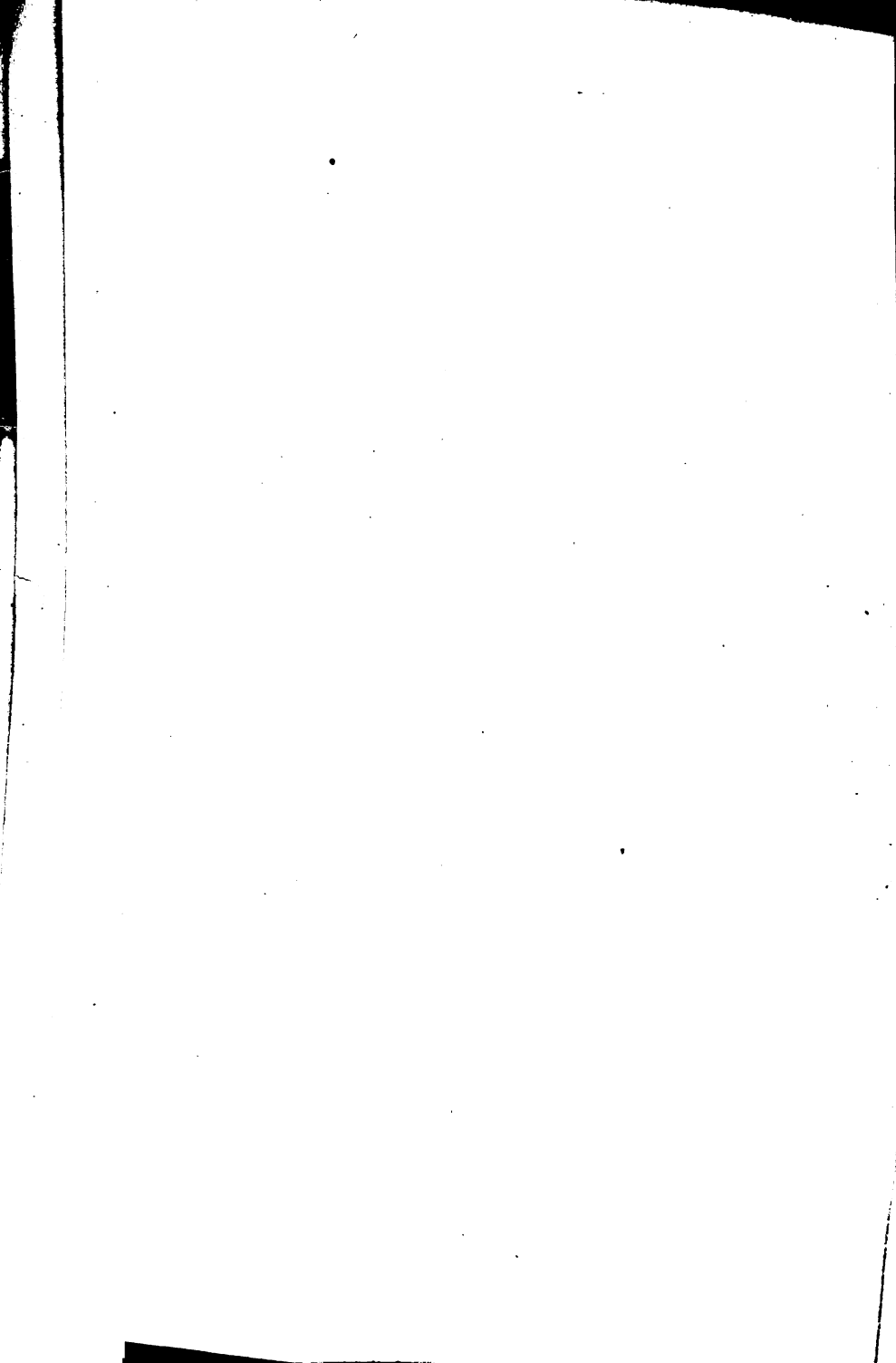
Col. T. W. Higginson.

12 March 1901.









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# · IDLER AND POET

BY

ROSSITER JOHNSON



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1883



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## IDLER AND POET.

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### PRELUDE.

A DOZEN steps out of the highway,  
At the turn of a country lane,  
Where an elm tree's pendulous branches  
Attemper the sun and the rain,  
I perch myself on the fence-rail,—  
Like a gull on a drifting mast,—  
To dream of the day that is passing,  
As other men dream of the past.

White clouds, like a bridal procession,  
Go trailing up heaven's blue aisles,  
With something that looks like sadness,  
And something akin to smiles.

On the slope of the woodside meadow  
The shadows turn with the sun,  
And there comes a perpetual murmur  
From the gravelly bed of the run.

Afar on the bluff's brown forehead  
Are clustered the homes of thrift ;  
On the intervale, ripe for the sickle,  
The harvests their billows lift.  
I have eaten their bread and their honey,  
But to-day, for an hour, I scorn  
The bees in the upland clover,  
The reapers of lowland corn.

I will sit here a monarch like Adam,  
Creation's procession to scan,  
While bird and beast go by me,  
And that beast of burden, Man.  
They are all of the race of the shadow ;  
They pass like a wavelet's gleam ;

But I for the moment seem real —  
I with my mid-day dream.

What creature is that in the meadow  
Parting the grass and the weeds  
With a long and slender furrow,  
Like a water-snake in the reeds ?  
Aha ! it is five young truants,  
Running from yonder school,  
To wander at will in the woodland,  
Or sport in the shadowy pool.

I am with you, my lads, for the frolic ;  
Let us never grow up into men ! —  
With you all day — but to-morrow,  
Ah ! you must excuse me then.  
For I know your beldame mistress,  
The bane of ingenuous youth,  
And I know the bamboo ferule,  
That bites like a serpent's tooth.

Can this be the last Paris fashion —  
The gentleman just passing by —  
One leg of his trousers bright scarlet,  
And one of an indigo dye?  
He's thrown away hat, gloves, and neck-cloth,  
His arms to the elbows are bare,  
And, intent on the acme of coolness,  
He's not wearing very much hair.

What a gay and a glorious creature  
Is Man when he dares to be free,  
When he casts off conventional trammels —  
Like that one out there, or like me.  
Perhaps he's a poet. O brother! —  
But the fellow breaks into a run,  
As over the brow of yon hillock  
The jailer appears with a gun.

With a click, and a thud, and a rustle,  
As hoofs fall on gravel or clay,

Rides a horsewoman up at a canter,  
 And down by the woodland away.  
 Superbly she sits in the saddle,  
 Enjoying the breeze she imparts,  
 With her skirt like a black flag behind her—  
 The dear little pirate of hearts!

But lady, why ride you thus lonely?  
 And where is your own cavalier?  
 Perhaps he's the slave of his business—  
 An M. C.—a great engineer—  
 Or the gentleman dressed in two colors,  
 Pursued by the man with a gun—  
 Or, now I bethink me, it may be—  
 It may be you never had one.

Two legs, and a walking-stick twirling,  
 A light Derby hat, a moustache,  
 There carry the hopes that are human,—  
 The blessings of Cupid and cash.



Two eyes of the hue of the raven,  
Two gloves of the shade of the dress,  
With a parasol slant on the shoulder,—  
These carry his joy or distress.

I can see by the faltering footsteps,  
By the parasol's pondering whirl,  
That something the boy has just uttered  
Has fluttered the heart of the girl.  
O lover, I earnestly wish you  
The Yes that you yearn for to-day,—  
May the time never come when in secret  
You would that her Yea had been Nay.

Is there aught looks so neat as a nurse-girl,  
In pinafore, ribbons, and cap?  
Is there aught that's so sweet as a baby  
When taking his morning nap?  
One hand on the perambulator,  
While one holds an open book

She trundles along the highway,  
And crosses the bridge o'er the brook.

O latest Arcadian dreamer,  
What magical carpet is this ?  
O cherub ! O chariot ! O charmer !  
O paper-and-calico bliss !  
Enjoy while you may, and be happy ;  
For the moment the hero shall make  
The proposal, denouement, or murder,  
Believe me, that cherub will wake.

It comes with a rumble of thunder  
It goes with a roll and a flash,—  
The circus with forty red wagons,  
To the music of laughter and lash.  
Ah ! there was my boyhood ambition,  
A dream worth a hundred of these —  
To ride in the sawdust arena,  
Or swing on the flying trapeze.

But I saw them one stormy midnight,  
When a whirlwind had shattered their cope,  
All patching the rotten canvas,  
And splicing the broken rope,  
While the rain, like a gallery's plaudits,  
Pelted master, musician, and clown,  
And the Queen of Equestrian Artists,  
And the Fat Woman's lilac gown.

What is youth, but a season of dodging?  
Or strength, if a stronger pursues?  
Or beauty, without its admirers?  
Or glory, but yesterday's news?  
Then let me be only an idler,  
Or poet — synonymous terms —  
Like a butterfly just graduated  
At the head of his class, the worms.

But let me descend from the fence-rail,  
And hurry away to my crust,

Ere the cloud that was raised by the circus  
Has made me a worm of the dust.  
And when I've another such outing,  
Let me spend it again like the last,  
To dream away days that are passing,  
As other men dream back the past.

## THE GATE OF TEARS.

THE summer-house was old and worn,  
A Moorish roof of painted pine,  
On seven slender shafts upborne,  
Half hidden by a clambering vine,  
And half in sunlight, while the leaves  
Of two great maples flecked the floor,  
With dancing shapes all shadowed o'er,  
And rustled round the broken eaves:  
It stood upon a point of land  
Far poised above a silver flood,  
And the deep gulf on either hand  
By swallow-flights alone was spanned,  
Or fleecy clouds in flying scud.  
What lovers may have whispered there  
In silences of evening air,

What robbers, at the midnight hour,  
Conspired to clutch crime's bloody dower,  
What tuneless poet watched the stars,  
What hermit soul through mortal bars  
Withdrawn from every mortal care,—  
I reckon not, for I see it still  
    As in one dreamy afternoon  
    When Summer's strength was freshly hewn,  
And Autumn's haze was on the hill.

Then we were children — happy time!  
    For this old world seemed shining new,  
And life was but a rattling rhyme,  
    And all its pretty tales were true.  
We played the old familiar games,  
    Until they palled upon the sense,  
And personated squires and dames,  
    And knaves and knights, in grave pretence,  
Till Helen, flinging from her lap  
    The autumn leaves, sprang up and cried,

“I know a game we have not tried —  
We’ll play at finding on the map !”  
She brought the atlas from the house,  
And spread it on the arbor floor ;  
We clustered round and conned it o’er,  
With wary eyes and thoughtful brows.

The turn went round until it fell  
To Arthur, him of fewest years  
Among us, and he pondered well,  
Then bade us find the Gate of Tears.  
What mighty travels now began —  
What voyages in unknown seas !  
We cruised among the Cyclades,  
And visited the Cingalese,  
And lingered at the Isle of Man.  
We crossed the Himalayan slopes,  
And climbed the Mountains of the Moon ;  
We trod Peruvian bridge of ropes,  
And lowland dyke, and Danish dune ;

We sailed the great Australian Bight,  
We basked awhile on tropic shores,  
We pulled the daring whaler's oars,  
And lost ourselves in Arctic night.  
On Orinoco's tangled banks  
The chattering monkeys mocked our quest;  
And in the red man's straggling ranks  
We thrid the rivers of the West;  
We followed up the Niger's course,  
And all the Dnieper's muddy miles,  
And where Ontario's waters force  
St. Lawrence through his Thousand Isles.  
With vague conjecture, jests, and jeers,  
We spelled out many a foreign name,  
But still were baffled by the game,  
And could not find the Gate of Tears.  
"You give it up," said Arthur — "Good !  
But see how plain it now appears —  
A voyage through the Red Sea's flood  
Will bring you to the Gate of Tears."



The Red Sea's flood, we knew not then,  
We've known too well in after years ;  
For time and truth have made us men —  
Swift time, stern truths told o'er again —  
And all have found the Gate of Tears.

'Twas Arthur, too, who found it first.  
We trembled when we saw him lay  
His gifts at dainty feet of clay,  
Whereon a clay-built statue stood,  
The travesty of all that's good.  
And sore we grieved to see him pass  
Into the cynic school, alas !  
With those who every joy declare  
An irised bubble blown in air,  
Because, forsooth ! their own has burst.

Then Hugh, the sturdy boy who seemed  
A giant in our childish eyes,  
Over his schoolday task had dreamed  
Of vast commercial enterprise,

And plodded on until he stood  
A merchant prince among his peers ;  
When came an ebb of Fortune's flood,  
And left him at the Gate of Tears.

And Francis of the midnight lamp,  
Who toiled in poverty, and chased  
His great discovery through the waste,  
In attic dim and cellar damp ;  
Who freely spent his little hoard,  
And begged and borrowed, spending still,  
And wrought and pondered, searched, and poured  
His life-blood in the crucible ;  
Who saw youth's friendships fading fast,  
And saw his kindred on their biers,—  
The mighty secret solved at last,  
All lonely by the Gate of Tears.

O Helen of the golden hair,  
Of all thy little mates that day,

Not one but would have borne thy care,  
Or plucked his own right eye away,  
To save those dark, deep, lustrous spheres  
Of thine from sorrow's bitter tears.  
It might not be; for thine the lot  
Of all good women since the fall:  
One half of life beside the cot,  
The other half beside the pall —  
Presiding over birth and death,  
Our earliest and our latest breath —  
Our entrance on a life of fears,  
Our exit at the Gate of Tears.

Last Edgar, when a flaming strife  
Wrote direful tidings on the sky,  
Went gaily forth, with sword on thigh,  
To battle for his country's life.  
Upon the heights where Round Top rears  
Its rugged crest, with voice elate  
He led his men through Glory's gate,—

But mother, sister, child, and wife  
Left weeping at the Gate of Tears.

O Father Land, of lands the best,  
O Mother Freedom, dearer still,  
What mystery moves the mighty will,  
That all our days must still be dressed  
In sable weeds, and pain and loss,  
The mourner's tear, the martyr's cross,  
Appear wherever we can see  
One step advances liberty ?

So was it when our Washington  
Thro' seven long years kept heart of hope,  
From Cambridge elm to Trenton slope,  
From Valley Forge to Yorktown's sun.  
So was it, too, when Lincoln led  
His people through the bloody years  
That Fate exacted as her price  
To shrive us of a hideous vice,—

Then bowed his own most reverend head,  
And left us at the Gate of Tears.  
So was it when a perfect man —  
If any perfect men there be —  
Became our chief; a little span  
With wisdom ruled, 'mid factions rife,  
Then slowly faded out of life,  
At Elberon, beside the sea.  
The whole world breathing prayers of hope,  
The nation quivering with its fears,  
For him the gates of triumph ope,  
For us, alas! the Gate of Tears.

So may it be when you and I,  
And all of us, uncertain stand,  
Compelled to cross, though fain to fly,  
The shadows of the border-land:  
With tranquil mind that knows at length  
All its own weakness, and its strength,  
Following in quiet self-control

The light that shines from out the soul,  
The wisdom never born of years,  
That leads where surer suns may rise,  
And show the gloomy Gate of Tears  
An outer gate of Paradise.

## A SONG FOR A NEW YEAR.

THE sea sings the song of the ages,  
The mountain stands mutely sublime,  
While the blank of Eternity's pages  
Is filled by the fingers of Time.  
But Man robs the sea of its wonder,  
Making syllabled speech of its roar;  
He rendeth the mountain asunder,  
And rolleth his wheels through its core;  
He delveth deep down for earth's treasure,  
And every locked secret unbars:  
He scanneth the heavens at pleasure,  
And writeth his name on the stars.

But purpose is weaker than passion,  
And patience is dearer than blood;  
And his face groweth withered and ashen,  
Ere he findeth and graspeth the good.  
He pursueth the phantom of beauty,  
Or peddleth his valor for pelf,  
Till the iron of merciless Duty  
Hath cloven the armor of self.  
He soweth the life of his brother,  
He wasteth the half of his soul;  
The harvest is reaped by another,  
And Death dippeth deep for his toll.

So the march of triumphal procession,  
That Science were fain to begin,  
Is hindered with painful digression  
Of ignorance, folly, and sin.  
Through mazes of needless confusion  
The story of Freedom must bend,



And the grandest and simplest conclusion  
Go stumbling along to its end.  
Yet a year does not slide o'er the border  
Of time, but some progress it shows;  
And a lustrum proves prescience and order:  
Thus the drama creeps on to its close.

If the blood that was weaker than water  
Too thinly and sluggishly ran,  
Lo ! the wine of the vintage of slaughter  
Giveth strength to the sinews of Man.  
And the shout of a lusty young nation  
Now greets his gray brothers with glee;  
And the swell of its ringing vibration  
Sweeps over the isles of the sea;  
While Liberty looks for a morrow  
That promiseth joyous increase,  
As waneth her midnight of sorrow  
And waxeth her morning of peace.

## THE VICTORY.

WHEN Man, in his Maker's image, came  
To be the lord of the new-made earth,  
To conquer its forests, its beasts to tame,  
To gather its treasures and know their worth,  
All readily granted his power and place,  
Save the Ocean, the Mountain, and Time, and  
Space;  
And these four sneered at his puny frame,  
And made of his lordship a theme for mirth.

Whole ages passed while his flocks he tended,  
And delved and dreamed, as the years went by,  
Till there came an age when his genius splendid  
Had bridged the rivers, and sailed the sky,

And raised the dome that defied the storm,  
And mastered the beauties of color and form;  
But his power was lost, his dominion ended,  
Where Time, Space, Mountain, or Sea was nigh.

The Mountains rose in their grim inertness  
Between the peoples, and made them strange,  
Save as in moments of pride or pertness  
They climbed the ridge of their native range,  
And, looking down on the tribe below,  
Saw nothing there but a deadly foe,  
Heard only a war-cry, long and shrill,  
In echoes leaping from hill to hill.

The Ocean rolled in its mighty splendor,  
Washing the slowly wasting shore,  
And the voices of nations, fierce or tender,  
Lost themselves in its endless roar.  
With frail ships launched on its treacherous  
surge,

And sad eyes fixed on its far blue verge,  
Man's hold of life seemed brittle and slender,  
And the Sea his master for evermore.

And Space and Time brought their huge dimensions

To separate man from his brother man,  
And sowed between them a thousand dissensions,

That ripened in hatred and caste and clan.  
So Sea and Mountain and Time and Space  
Laughed again in his lordship's face,  
And bade him blush for his weak inventions  
And the narrow round his achievements ran.

But one morning he made him a slender wire,  
As an artist's vision took life and form,  
While he drew from heaven the strange fierce fire  
That reddens the edge of the midnight storm;  
And he carried it over the Mountain's crest,

And dropped it into the Ocean's breast;  
And Science proclaimed, from shore to shore,  
That Time and Space ruled man no more.

Then the brotherhood lost on Shinar's plain  
Came back to the peoples of earth again.

"Be one!" sighed the Mountain, and shrank  
away.

"Be one!" murmured Ocean, in dashes of  
spray.

"Be one!" said Space, "I forbid no more."

"Be one!" echoed Time, "till my years are o'er."

"We are one!" said the nations, as hand met  
hand

In a thrill electric from land to land.

## FAITH'S SURRENDER.

As vanquished years behind me glide,  
Trailing the banner of their boasts,  
Lo! step for step and stride for stride,  
Beside me walk their silent ghosts.  
Each, while a narrow moment burned,  
The breath of full existence shared ;  
Then mortal Substance backward turned,  
Immortal Shadow onward fared.

Between the doing and the dreaming,  
My slack hands fall ;  
Between the being and the seeming,  
My senses pall ;

And swiftly through life's broken arches  
Care with his troop triumphant marches,  
And claims me thrall.

There ever, 'mid the moving throng  
Whose mocking footfalls echo mine,  
Poor widowed Memory leads along  
Her children in a lengthened line.  
What time the head in silence hung,  
I knew them by that voiceless sign —  
Their tender forms forever young,  
Their weary eyes as old as mine.

Between retreating and encroaching  
Their footprints lie;  
Between beseeching and reproaching  
Their voices die;  
And every scheme of better living  
They mar with blotches of misgiving,  
And thrust it by.

The one foul word in record fair  
    Stands out the foremost on the page,  
Till all of good or glory there  
    Seems chance-achieved or shrunk with age;  
The present help of manly strength,  
    The royal sway of manly will,  
However bold, go down at length  
    Before some iron-visored ill.

Betwixt old baulk and new beginning,  
    How Courage quails!  
'Twixt white intent and stain of sinning,  
    How Virtue fails!  
And backward on her own path turning,  
Where Hazard's lurid torch is burning,  
    How Reason pales!

From self the subtle motive spun,  
    Through self the generous purpose burns,  
For self the martyr deed is done,



And round to self at last returns  
The boon for others dearly bought,  
The far result of sacrifice,  
That triumphs in completed thought,  
Or lights a gleam in dying eyes.

Betwixt grim fact and sad surmising,  
Joys merge in pain ;  
'Twixt love of self and self-despising,  
What grounds remain  
Where Hope is lord and Fear is vassal,  
Where calm Content may build her castle,  
Nor build in vain ?

Though Truth be steadfast as the hills  
Whose flinty faces mock at Time,  
What boots it, if no living rills  
Roll downward from that steep sublime ?  
I could not hold its airy height,  
Though I should tread the narrow track,

While trembling foot and failing sight  
Conspire too well to hurl me back.

Between the climbing and the creeping,  
    There's blood and bruise ;  
Between the laughing and the weeping,  
    The soul may lose  
Her grasp of all that makes the morrow  
Seem other than a greener sorrow,  
    With fresher dews.

## OPPORTUNITY.

Nor idly dreaming of Thy heaven,  
Nor longing for some vague delight  
With scorn of such as time has given,  
Nor blind to glories of the night  
With watching for the break of dawn,  
Nor mourning good forever gone,  
Far from my fellow men withdrawn,  
Would I Thy mercies, Lord, requite.

The great to-come is Thine alone ;  
The past, we know not whose it is ;  
Its days and deeds are all its own,  
And mine, mayhap, its miseries.

But though all things beyond may be  
Concealed in hazy drapery,  
One little circle round is free  
    From darkness, doubt, and mysteries.

That little circle, now and here,  
    Moves onward with me as I go ;  
That hazy curtain hanging near  
    Rolls backward with continual flow ;  
And still my growing pathway glides  
Where some divine impulsion guides,  
And still Thy firmament abides,  
    And through the mist its beacons glow.

The measure of Thy work is more  
    Than I may ever hope to span  
With compass of the little lore  
    That puffs the mind of puny man.  
I only know that round my feet  
Lie shreds of purpose incomplete,

Which I must help to form and meet,  
Revealing Thy eternal plan.

I only know that in my heart  
Somehow there must be something good;  
Thou wouldst not set my task apart  
And give me stubble, hay, and wood,  
And these alone, that my desire  
Might build in mockery a pyre  
But meant for the consuming fire,  
Where otherwise some hope had stood.

Though, fair Ambition's banner furled,  
And every outlook growing less,  
I elbow through a crowded world,  
With daily toil and strife and stress,  
If eye and heart to heaven be true,  
Some bit of sky I still may view,  
And from that little arc of blue  
The sphere of Thy creation guess.

## A LOVE-LETTER WITHOUT A LADY.

Is the new summer bursting as freshly as ever,  
Along the smooth margin of old Genesee,  
Where the trillium wakes with a lingering  
shiver  
Beneath the low boughs of the evergreen tree ?

Creeps the trailing arbutus o'er hillock and  
hollow,  
Through leafage whose greenness and glory  
are fled ?  
Rises dawn with a flush of new glories to follow ?  
Comes the night with less terror and chill in  
its tread ?

In the grottoes we know, are the sculptures of  
     Winter  
     Made ruin and rubbish, the sport of the  
     Spring ?  
 From the great rocky walls do they crumble  
     and splinter,  
     Whence newly born rivulets saunter and  
     sing ?

Has the last shrunken drift from the meadows  
     departed,  
     Like a stage-ghost at dawn, with the dust on  
     its face ?  
 O'er the long, grassy slopes have the cloud-  
     shadows started,  
     As in summers of old, their perpetual chase ?

Do you wander as once under cliff and through  
     tangle,  
     By pools where cross-currents in dark eddies  
     meet ?

Or study the offers of crevice and angle,  
That hold out temptations to hazardous feet ?

It is long, long ago now — and longer in seem-  
ing —

Since I stood with you by that river so fair;  
But its ripple or roar, as it runs through my  
dreaming,

Has no meaning or music unless you are there.

The Merrimack's waters are brighter and purer  
Through livelier landscapes they sparkle and  
spree ;

But the step of the idler grows dull and de-  
murer,

For with you walks my soul by our own  
Genesee.

There's a love that comes forth at the bidding of  
beauty,



And virtue, and goodness, 'twixt woman and  
                  man ;  
 There's a love more allied to devotion and duty,  
          That owes its existence to kindred and clan.

There is also a love that no mystery darkens,  
          No passion need fire, and no blindness defend,  
 No whisper can hurt while suspiciousness heark-  
          ens,  
          No envy distract, and no jealousy rend.

It is born of the spirit that finds itself mated —  
          Or soaring or mining — by one of its kind ;  
 That can follow it far, or await it belated,  
          Can lead it in freedom, or cheer it confined ;

That feels how it labors, or triumphs, or strug-  
          gles ;  
          That sees what it aims at, and knows why it  
          fails ;

That peers at a glance through the gauzes and  
juggles

That screen and succeed where no merit avails.

No thrill marks its birth, and no rapture its  
presence;

But it grows in each fibre by circumstance  
tried,

From boyhood to manhood through long juve-  
nescence,—

And such 'tis I send you from Merrimack's  
side.

## DEDICATION.

If that indeed were fact, which seems  
A pleasant universal fiction,  
That's daily born of youthful dreams,  
Nor dies of daily contradiction —

That every mortal has a mate,  
And counterparts go blindly groping  
To find perchance through fogs of fate  
The end of all their weary hoping, —

I'd say: Whatever I have done,  
To manhood's earnest work befitting,  
Be consecrate to her alone  
Who waits for me, though all unwitting;

Who puts the signs of pain away,  
Lest grief too soon her cheek should furrow ;  
Who beats temptation back to-day,  
That I may see some glad to-morrow ;

Who dare not pluck a flower that grows  
Beyond the path God spreads before her,  
Nor ever thinks of passing those  
That bloom beside it to adore her ;

Who strives to add a cubit yet  
By faith unto her moral stature —  
Dear soul ! — lest I should feel regret  
At finding less than mine her nature ;

Whose hands train many a trailing vine,  
That mine had rudely left to perish,  
And all its tendrils deftly twine  
In folds that failing years shall cherish ;

Whose steps will mark life's tune alway,  
Though mine have stumbled, failed, and  
blundered ;  
Whose spirit walks with mine to-day,  
However far our feet are sundered.

## ON THE CLIFF.

“SEE where the crest of the long promontory,  
Decked by October in crimson and brown,  
Lies like the scene of some fairy-land story,  
Over the sands to the deep sloping down.  
See the white mist on the hidden horizon  
Hang like the folds of the curtain of fate.  
See where yon shadow the green water flies on,  
Cast from a cloud for the conclave too late.

“See the small ripples in curving ranks chasing  
Every light breeze running out from the shore,  
Gleeful as children when merrily racing,  
Hands interlocked, o’er a wide meadow floor.

See round the pier how the tossing wave sparkles,  
Bright as the hope in a love-lighted breast.  
See the one sail in the sunlight that darkles,  
Laboring home from the lands of the west.

“See the low surf where it restlessly tumbles,  
Swiftly advancing, and then in retreat.  
See how the tall cliff yields slowly and  
crumbles,  
Sliding away to the gulfs at our feet.  
Sure is thy victory, emblem of weakness ;  
Certain thine overthrow, ponderous wall.  
Brittle is sternness, but mighty is meekness —  
O wave that will conquer ! O cliff that  
must fall !”

---

“Ah lady, how deep is this truth of your teaching !  
All that delights and intralls you I see ;

But little you dream of the meaning far-reach-  
ing,

Yea more than you meant them, your words  
have for me.

Light run my fancies that once were too sober ;

All the fair land of the future lies spread,

Brightly before me, in hues of October ;

Homeward, full laden, my ship turns her  
head.

“Dimly across them falls fate’s mystic curtain :

If but thy fingers would draw it away,

Making the fanciful turn to the certain,

Then would the sounds and the sights of  
to-day

Ring like the strains of a ballad pathetic,

Heard when the voice of the singer is dumb ;

Glow like the great words on pages prophetic,

Read when the fingers that wrote them are  
numb.



“Into the depths of thy dreamy eyes peering,  
Watching thy lips for some shadowy sign,  
Trembling in doubt betwixt hoping and fear-  
ing,

Stands my poor soul, and appeals unto thine.  
Barren as sea-sand is every ambition,

Pride but the foam in the breaker concealed ;  
Fame is a shadow, and wealth a derision —

O love that will triumph ! O life that must  
yield !”

### ON THE STAIRS.

SWIFT tho' the foot-fall of midnight advances,

Let us linger a while on the stairs —

Nothing to witness our words and our glances

But the astral that over us flares.

Ah, how in contrast with gloomy November

The gleam of their brilliance appears !

You may forget them, but I shall remember —

Remember these glances for years.

Press but the fingers for needless assurance,

Touch the lips for a token of truth —

Ah, how it girds for heroic endurance

The pitiful weakness of youth !

So rises purpose that never shall slumber,

So rings its brave song in my ears ;

You may forget them, but I must remember —  
Remember these moments for years.

What tho' the spirit be robbed of its buoyance,  
Still wrapped in the cumbersome clay?  
What tho' the wear of incessant annoyance  
Shall fritter endeavor away,  
Turn the fair June into dull-eyed December,  
Drown exultation in tears?  
You may forget them, but I shall remember —  
Remember these moments for years.

Even as now I pass out of the portal,  
To the slumberous silence of night,  
So if Remembrance, immured but immortal,  
From the dwelling of earth take her flight,  
Then, when the ashes of life's falling ember  
Are lighted with flickering fears,  
You may forget them, while I shall remember  
These moments surviving the years.

✓

## LAURENCE.

He came in the glory of summer; in the terror  
of summer he went:

Like a blossom the breezes have wafted; like a  
bough that the tempest has rent.

His blue eyes unclosed in the morning, his  
brown eyes were darkened at morn;

And the durance of pain could not banish the  
beauty wherewith he was born.

He came — can we ever forget it, while the years  
of our pilgrimage roll? —

He came in thine anguish of body, he passed  
'mid our anguish of soul.

He brought us a pride and a pleasure, he left  
us a pathos of tears :

A dream of impossible futures, a glimpse of un-  
calendared years.

His voice was a sweet inspiration, his silence a  
sign from afar ;

He made us the heroes we were not, he left us  
the cowards we are.

For the moan of the heart follows after his clay,  
with perpetual dole,

Forgetting the torture of body is lost in the  
triumph of soul.

A man in the world of his cradle, a sage in his  
infantine lore,

He was brave in the might of endurance, was  
patient, — and who can be more ?

He had learned to be shy of the stranger, to  
welcome his mother's warm kiss,

To trust in the arms of his father, — and who  
can be wiser than this ?

The lifetime we thought lay before him, 'already  
was rounded and whole,

In dainty completeness of body and wondrous  
perfection of soul.

The newness of love at his coming, the fresh-  
ness of grief when he went,

The pitiless pain of his absence, the effort at  
argued content,

The dim eye forever retracing the few little  
footprints he made,

The quick thought forever recalling the visions  
that never can fade, —

For these but one comfort, one answer, in faith's  
or philosophy's roll :

Came to us for a pure little body, went to God  
for a glorified soul.

✓

## EVELYN.

If I could know  
That here about the place where last you  
    played —  
Within this room, and yonder in the shade  
    Of branches low —  
Your spirit lingered, I would never go,  
But evermore a hermit pace the round  
Of sunny paths across this garden ground,  
    And o'er the fleckered lawn  
Whereon your baby chariot was drawn,  
    And round these lonely walls,  
    Where no sound ever falls  
So pretty as your prattle or your crow, —  
    If I could only know !

If I could know  
That to some distant clime or planet rare  
Sweet souls like thine repair,  
Where love's own fountains fail not as they  
flow, —  
I'd be a traveller, and would ever go,  
Day after day, along the selfsame road,  
Leaving behind this desolate abode,  
My head upon my pillow only lay  
To dream myself still farther on the way,  
Until at last I rest,  
Clasping my little daughter to my breast,  
Though half eternity were wasted so, —  
If I could only know !

If I could know  
That you a child with childlike ways remain,  
I'd never wish to be a man again,  
But only try to grow  
As childlike, using all the idle toys



That you and I have played with, till their  
noise

Brought back the echoes of your merry laugh,  
When paper windmill whirled upon its staff,  
Or painted ball went rolling on the floor,

Or puss peeped out behind the door,

Or watch, held half in fear,

With its mysterious ticking thrilled your ear :

All manly occupation I'd forego,

If I could only know !

If I could know

That henceforth, in some pure eternal sphere,

The little life that grew so swiftly here

Would still expand and grow,

How should I strive against my wasting years,

With toil from sun to sun, and midnight tears,

To build my soul up to the height of yours,

And catch the light that lures,

The inspiration that impels,

The strength that dwells,  
Beyond the bounds of earthly cares and fears,  
Beyond this bitter wo, —  
If I could only know !

Alas ! what do I know ?  
I know your world scarce compassed yonder  
stone —

As little seems my own !  
I know you never knew unhappiness —  
Would I could mourn the less !  
I know you never saw death's darker side —  
The shore where we abide !  
I know you never felt the nameless dread —  
Ah, but if mine were fled !  
I know you never heard a lover's vow —  
And I'm your lover now !  
I know no answer to my wail can come —  
Let me be dumb !

## A SOLDIER POET.

WHERE swell the songs thou shouldst have sung

By peaceful rivers yet to flow?

Where bloom the smiles thy ready tongue

Would call to lips that loved thee so?

On what far shore of being tossed,

Dost thou resume the genial stave,

And strike again the lyre we lost

By Rappahannock's troubled wave?

If that new world hath hill and stream,

And breezy bank, and quiet dell,

If forests murmur, waters gleam,

And wayside flowers their story tell,

Thy hand ere this has plucked the reed  
That wavered by the wooded shore,  
Its prisoned soul thy fingers freed,  
To float melodious evermore.

So seems it to my musing mood,  
So runs it in my surer thought,  
That much of beauty, more of good,  
For thee the rounded years have wrought;  
That life will live, however blown  
Like vapor on the summer air;  
That power perpetuates its own;  
That silence here is music there.

## A WOMAN OF THE WAR.

THROUGH the sombre arch of that gateway tower  
Where my humblest townsman rides at last,  
You may spy the bells of a nodding flower,  
On a double mound that is thickly grassed.

And between the spring and the summer time,  
Or ever the lilac's bloom is shed,  
When they come with banners and wreaths and  
rhyme,  
To deck the tombs of the nation's dead,

They find there a little flag in the grass,  
And fling a handful of roses down,

And pause a moment before they pass  
To the Captain's grave with the gilded crown.

But if perchance they seek to recall  
What name, what deeds, these honors declare,  
They can not tell, they are silent all  
As the noiseless harebell nodding there.

She was tall, with an almost manly grace,  
And young, with strange wisdom for one so  
young,  
And fair with more than a woman's face ;  
With dark, deep eyes, and a mirthful tongue.

The poor and the fatherless knew her smile ;  
The friend in sorrow had seen her tears ;  
She had studied the ways of the rough world's  
guile,  
And read the romance of historic years.

What she might have been in these times of  
ours,

At once it is easy and hard to guess ;  
For always a riddle are half-used powers,  
And always a power is lovingness.

But her fortunes fell upon evil days —  
If days are evil when evil dies —  
And she was not one who could stand at gaze  
Where the hopes of humanity fall and rise.

Nor could she dance to the viol's tune,  
When the drum was throbbing throughout  
the land,  
Or dream in the light of the summer moon,  
When Treason was clenching his mailed hand.

Through the long gray hospital's corridor  
She journeyed many a mournful league,

And her light foot fell on the oaken floor  
As if it never could know fatigue.

She stood by the good old surgeon's side,  
And the sufferers smiled as they saw her  
stand ;

She wrote, and the mothers marvelled and cried  
At their darling soldiers' feminine hand.

She was last in the ward when the lights  
burned low,  
And Sleep called a truce to his foeman Pain ;  
At the midnight cry she was first to go,  
To bind up the bleeding wound again.

For sometimes the wreck of a man would rise,  
Weird and gaunt in the watch-lamp's gleam,  
And tear away bandage and splints and ties,  
Fighting the battle all o'er in his dream.



No wonder the youngest surgeon felt  
A charm in the presence of that brave soul,  
Through weary weeks, as she nightly knelt  
With the letter from home or the doctor's dole.

He heard her called, and he heard her blessed,  
With many a patriot's parting breath;  
And ere his soul to itself confessed,  
Love leaped to life in those vigils of death.

"O, fly to your home!" came a whisper dread,  
"For now the pestilence walks by night."  
"The greater the need of me here," she said,  
And bared her arm for the lancet's bite.

Was there death, green death, in the atmosphere?  
Was the bright steel poisoned? Who can  
tell?  
Her weeping friends gathered beside her bier,  
And the clergyman told them all was well.

Well — alas that it should be so !

When a nation's debt reaches reckoning-day—  
Well for it to be able, but wo  
To the generation that's called to pay !

Down from the long gray hospital came  
Every boy in blue who could walk the floor ;  
The sick and the wounded, the blind and lame,  
Formed two long files from her father's door.

There was grief in many a manly breast,  
While men's tears fell as the coffin passed ;  
And thus she went to the world of rest,  
Martial and maidenly up to the last.

And that youngest surgeon, was he to blame ? —  
He held the lancet — Heaven only knows.  
No matter ; his heart broke all the same,  
And he laid him down, and never arose.

So Death received, in his greedy hand,  
Two precious coins of the awful price.  
That purchased freedom for this dear land —  
For master and bondman — yea, bought it  
twice.

Such fates too often such women are for !  
God grant the Republic a large increase,  
To match the heroes in time of war,  
And mother the children in time of peace.

## DOWN THE GENESEE.

*Written for the Walking Club.*

THE mellow sunlight of a day like this  
    Illumes a page in life's prosaic volume;  
And, charmed to languor with its gleam of bliss,  
I linger idly over it, nor miss  
    Its touch of pathos solemn.

Here come to me again the dreams of yore,  
    All sweeping back in one tumultuous legion —  
The long excursions on the wooded shore,  
The feats of daring in the cataract's roar,  
    The fairy-haunted region,

The little fictions of my boyish days,  
    Which time already has begun to mellow:

Here marshy Marathon my step delays,  
There's Buena Vista sleeping in the haze,  
And yonder Porto Bello.

Behind that reedy barrier we took,  
With cruel barb, the unsuspecting shiner ;  
On this green slope perused the wonder-book ;  
Or upward traced the tumbling streams to look  
For fields and flowers diviner.

The royal sunlight hung a golden fleece  
On every tree that rose beyond the river,  
And, crossing over from the shores of Greece,  
We sought to snatch it from that grove of peace,  
And make it ours forever.

Its texture, woven in our web of thought,  
May warm the pulses of some cold hereafter,  
When storm and wreck have bowed each Argonaut

In sad decrepitude, and age has brought  
The years that know not laughter.

Till then, like this be every balmy June,  
I shall not sigh for any lost romances;  
In such a mellow, merry afternoon  
The chords of life strike up a nobler tune,  
Inspiring sweeter fancies.

A fairer Doge this Bucentaur now bears  
Than e'er espoused the sparkling Adriatic;  
And we, the happiest of gondoliers,  
Push our light craft from off the rustic piers,  
In quest of feats aquatic.

O you whose strong arms stretch the bending oar,  
And you whose soft eyes in the sunlight  
quiver,  
May I walk with you on the Elysian shore,  
Beyond the tumult of the cataract's roar,  
Beyond the eternal river.

## PEN AND CHISEL.

*A Friend forsakes Polite Literature for Plain Sculpture.*

I SAW the masses of rock, rough quarried out of  
the ledge,  
And the tools wherewith to carve, and the mit-  
ten to shield the fist,  
The points of cold blue steel, and the heavy  
short-helved sledge,—  
And I thought: Will his stone ideal surpass his  
poetical grist?

Ah, yes! 'twas a wise exchange, and must be  
productive of pelf.  
'Tis better to sculp than boheme; 'tis safer to  
hew than to hack;

'Tis pleasanter far to chisel than always be  
chiselled yourself,  
Though the muscles be strained and sore, and  
the left thumb battered and black.

The form of a perfect brick shall leap to life at  
thy touch,  
Where sandstone, limestone, and grit lay lifeless  
and cold before—  
Capital, cornice, and shaft, Corinthian, Doric,  
and Dutch ;  
And perhaps the corner-stone of a corner gro-  
cery store.

Time may tatter this foolscap, but thy window-  
caps shall endure ;  
The rains of centuries cannot efface thy most  
delicate rune ;  
And o'er the ideal sill that thou freest with  
mallet-stroke sure,



Some lovely maiden leaning may sigh to the  
Muse or the Moon.

'Tis better to chip at a flint than bore at a  
block-headed world ;  
An auger will make less dust in a day than a  
drove in an hour ;  
And if with incessant pounding a point be  
dubbed and curled,  
The man of bellows and tongs will restore its  
cleaving power.

But who can a remedy find for a gray goose  
quill diseased ?  
Can a blacksmith point a joke ? Will a grind-  
stone polish a verse ?  
A contract is easier filled than a critical public  
pleased,  
And the rocks thou hewest now have counter-  
parts in the purse.

All labor is work, more or less ; and the laborer  
worthy his hire ;  
But alas for the gypsy crew who essay to live  
by their wits !  
'Twere better to burn our works, and temper  
a steel in the fire,  
To carve a lofty column where Fame in her  
temple sits.

## A BIRTHDAY POEM.

IN yonder homestead, brown and old,  
One room is closed like Bluebeard's hall,  
And o'er the panes, with heavy fold,  
Moved by no breath, the curtains fall.  
No curious girl or babbling boy  
Its sacred silence dare destroy  
With merry laugh or rattling toy,  
Or lift the latch and break the thrall.  
But every year rolls round a day  
When every door is opened wide,  
And through the room from side to side  
The yellow sunbeams freely play.  
And fearless children then may view  
The wonders of that unknown land :

The gorgeous carpet, red and blue,  
The trinkets on the corner-stand,  
The great old Bible, grandly bound,  
The profiles on the walls around,  
The antlers Grandsire's rifle won  
Ere Grandsire's axe the forest laid,  
The sampler Grandma's hands begun  
When Grandma was a blushing maid,  
And all things curious and rare  
That careful years have garnered there.

So live we cramped in half our souls,  
Nor ever know the better part,  
Save when some anniversary rolls  
The door back from our inmost heart,  
And lets us see our real selves  
And all the rapid years have wrought :  
The folded fabrics of old thought,  
Laid by on half-forgotten shelves,  
The hopes, once living, whose pale ghosts

Yet walk the chambers where they died,  
The profile of a perished pride,  
The dreams that thronged, like Persian hosts,  
The pass where Never stood at bay,  
The golden hue of sunset shores  
That slowly grew an ashen gray  
Ere we could ship the weary oars.  
To eat, to labor, and to sleep,  
And satisfy material needs,  
To strive, to do, perhaps to keep  
Some foolish record of our deeds,  
To hear, now friendship's cheap-won praise,  
The patter now of petty ills,—  
What is it to the life that fills  
Our birthdays and our burial days?

## THE STAGE-RIDE.

*A Fragment.*

THE sandy highway, fringed with green,  
By sparkling water-courses led  
Along some ancient river's bed,  
With wealth of intervalle between,  
Winds upward toward the purple range,  
As journeys one in morning dream,  
And bridges many a murmuring stream,  
And revels in continual change.  
Just over there the mountains lie,  
The quiet brood of quiet sky;  
Just over there their shadow falls.  
We wind through many a narrow dell,  
And vale whose bounds more gently swell,

Right onward toward the rocky walls ;  
And still through this delusive air  
    Their rugged sides above us bend  
    And seem to mark our journey's end,  
Just over there, just over there.  
But lo ! the clouds, in tatters dressed,  
Come clambering o'er the mountain crest,  
And tumbling here, or settling there,  
Now buoyed a while in denser air,  
Now clinging to some rocky ledge,  
    In sunlight dark, in shadow pale,  
Creep slowly down as if to wage  
    An Indian warfare on the vale.  
Our leaders snuff the coming shower,  
And put forth more determined power :  
Our wheels more eager crunch the sand,  
We grasp the rail with firmer hand,  
Hold hats against the stiffening breeze,  
More nimbly dodge the drooping trees,  
Fall helpless in the ambushed jolts,

Dream timidly of breaking bolts,  
Suspend a while the anxious breath  
Where one mis-step might hurl to death,  
Dash at the low hill's rocky face,  
Spin like a peg-top round its base,  
Go thundering through the heaving bridge,  
And roll along the causeway's ridge,—  
Till horses, driver, men, and freight  
    Seem but an animated whole,  
With one quick impulse all elate,  
    The thrill of one impassioned soul.



## THE LAND OF NODDY.

### *A Lullaby.*

Put away the bauble and the bib !  
Smooth out the pillow' in the crib !  
Softly on the down  
Lay the baby's crown,  
Warm around its feet  
Tuck the little sheet, —  
Snug as a pea in a pod !  
With a yawn and a gape,  
And a dreamy little nap,  
We will go, we will go,  
To the Landy-andy-pandy  
Of Noddy-oddy-poddy,  
To the Landy-andy-pand  
Of Noddy-pod.

There in the Shadow-Maker's tent,  
After the twilight's soft descent,  
    We'll lie down to dreams  
    Of milk in flowing streams ;  
    And the Shadow-Maker's baby  
    Will lie down with us, may be,  
On the soft mossy pillow of the sod.  
    In a drowse and a doze,  
    All asleep from head to toes,  
    We will lie, we will lie,  
In the Landy-andy-pandy  
    Of Noddy-oddy-poddy,  
In the Landy-andy-pand  
    Of Noddy-pod.

Then when the morning breaks,  
Then when the lark awakes,  
    We'll leave the drowsy dreams,  
    And the twinkling starry gleams,  
    We'll leave the little tent,

And the wonders in it pent,  
To return to our own native sod.  
With a hop and a skip,  
And a jump and a flip,  
We will come, we will come,  
From the Landy-andy-pandy  
Of Noddy-oddy-poddy,  
From the Landy-andy-pand  
Of Noddy-pod.

## BREVI FINIETUR.

I ~~SOMETIMES~~ think my life has run  
Beyond the measure of its worth,  
And wonder when will rise the sun,  
The last that I shall see on earth.  
Again, life's brevity appears  
The only mar-plot ; and I plan  
How all might round to right, if man  
Could only live some hundred years.

But evermore this mournful thread  
Through all reflection's tissue runs :  
That if this dear one were not dead,  
Were that one still the same as once,

Had these a few more years been spared,  
And all my later fortune shared,  
Contented then I had not cared  
For what might lie beyond the suns;

That loss and blunders manifold,  
Which mar our brief existence here,  
Were not its knell so quickly tolled,  
Might be redeemed some future year;  
That he who faltered at the start  
And failed, were not the course so short,  
Might, by some latent force or art,  
Have won the race, the prize, the cheer.

## THE WINDING OF THE CLOCK.

THERE is many a sober moral  
In the old clock on the wall.  
But the moral of its winding  
Is the deepest of them all.

It minds me that these listless hands  
And this slow-moving brain,  
Must have diurnal turns of sleep  
To wind them up again.

It speaks of friends that once were dear,  
And household places filled,  
Whose wheels of life are clogged with dust,  
Whose busy hands are stilled.

And I, in dullness clicking on  
Throughout my little day,  
Must finally run down and be  
As profitless as they.

And then I think, the motive power  
That drives existence round  
Is often some dead weight of care,  
Slow settling to the ground;

While eager hands of human hope,  
Forever reaching out  
Toward higher figures of the good  
Whose shadow turns about,

Still follow in a curving track  
Around one dreary plane,  
Where noontide joy, whenever full,  
Drops back to nought again.

Yes, there's many a solemn moral  
In the old clock on the wall,  
But the moral of its winding  
Is the deepest of them all.



## MY SHIP.

'Twas a gallant craft as ever sailed,  
And a marvellous merry crew she bore,  
When with canvas set and colors nailed  
I sent her out to a distant shore.  
I sent her out with a broad command  
To cruise at will through the Golden Isles,  
And bring me the product of every land  
That the soul delights or the sense beguiles.

Tough are the timbers that compass her sides,  
And the lines are graceful that curve to her  
keel,  
And she leaves a foamy wake as she rides  
Secure with her steadiest man at the wheel.

And that foamy wake in my dreams I see,  
Where whitens the wave for a thousand  
miles ;  
And the man at the wheel, unmindful of me,  
Is looking ahead for the Golden Isles.

If waking I walk on the lonely shore,  
The foam of her furrow has melted away,  
And I know that her sailors are merry no more,  
And her pilot I know must be withered and  
gray.

But I still believe that her ensign burns,  
And on her brown canvas the sunlight smiles,  
As heavily laden she homeward turns,  
Or cruises yet 'mid the Golden Isles.

And I never doubt she will surely come.  
Riding in on some happy tide,  
Strained and battered, but bearing home  
All that she sought o'er the ocean wide.

And if father Charon should pluck my sleeve  
And point to his skiff, with a laughing lip  
I'd do his bidding, and still believe  
I am only going to meet my ship.

### MOTOMANIA.

How mean it makes a fellow feel —  
    'Tis cruel, I declare —  
To go to where the object is,  
    And find it is n't there,  
But fled to parts unknown, and left  
    No intimation where.

O Muse, bring all your metaphors  
    Of roses rent from stem,  
And chalice emptied of its wine,  
    And casket of its gem,  
And pretty birds from cages flown,—  
    For I have need of them.

The blinds are closed, and through their lids,  
    Into itself withdrawn,  
The house seems gazing on me like  
    A drowsy man at dawn.  
But fearlessly I pull the bell,  
    And look to see it yawn.

Alas! its opening portal  
    Will welcome me no more ;  
For now, where erst an argent field  
    The name in sable bore,  
I see three ugly gimlet-holes  
    Disfiguring the door.

When she but made her summer tour,  
    A silence seemed to brood  
In deep but hopeful sorrow o'er  
    The lonely neighborhood.  
'Tis utter desolation now,  
    When she is gone for good.

The maples on the avenue  
Are yellowing with the year;  
They cast their knightly cloaks to earth,  
As if her steps were near,  
But to be trod by meaner feet,  
And swept by robes less dear.

How mean it makes a fellow feel —  
'Tis cruel, I declare —  
To go to where his charmer lives,  
And find she lives not there.  
It makes him bite his lips, and wish  
It were not wrong to swear.

## AN OLD SHOE.

Ah well, for us all some sweet hope lies !

MAUD MULLER.

You scan to-day the coming years  
Along life's sunniest slope,  
And see through mist of bridal tears  
The rainbow-light of hope.  
What matters if our own henceforth  
Shall want that cheering sign ?  
What matters if for one of us  
You've slighted thirty-nine ?

The gods are not all cruelty ;  
The wretch whom they destroy  
Still finds that fortune has some faults,  
And misery some alloy.

So may the proud and suffering ones  
Not all dejected stand,  
And they who in the desert dwell  
Abuse the Promised Land.

You'll walk no more with lovers  
By moonlight on the green,  
But somewhat anxiously inquire  
The price of kerosene.  
Warm, girlish fancies now make way  
For figures coldly true,  
And tradesmen's due-bills take the place  
Of tender *billets-doux*.

The spring-time once was heralded  
By birds and budding flowers,  
And lilac odors filled the air,  
And gently dropping showers ;  
But now must sound of suds be heard,  
And carpet-dust be flying,



And loud-mouthed Madam fret and scold,  
Where love-struck Miss was sighing.

Refulgent summer, once so dear.  
Is only known as fly-time;  
And autumn, gorgeous in its gold,  
Is simply can and dry time,  
When busy housewives, putting up  
The winter's dainty rations,  
Preserve and sweeten all things else  
But temper, tongue, and patience.

The first young snow-storm brings no thoughts  
Of merry bells and balls,  
Of sleigh-rides on the avenue,  
Of concerts, plays, and calls.  
You sit by the frosted window,  
And watch the falling flake,  
And reckon how much oven-wood  
The trysting-tree will make.

One moment's thought we give to thee,  
Where bridal favors gleam,  
Whose smile is now a memory,  
Whose p`esence but a dream.  
We then resume our darkened ways —  
God speed the light of thine !—  
And in one suitor's bliss forget  
The pangs of thirty-nine.

## AN INDIAN LOVE-SONG.

FROM his ambush in thy shadowy eyes, Love  
sped a shaft at mine ;

'Twas feathered with a shining tress, and barbed  
with a smile divine.

My heart is all a-quiver ; but hear me while I  
sing —

Oh let me be thy beau, and I will never snap  
the string !

Then clad in noiseless moccasins the feet of  
the years shall fall ;

For I will cherish thee, my love, till Time  
shall scalp us all.

Not with the glittering wampum have I come  
thy smiles to woo ;  
But to offer a cabin passage down life's river in  
my canoe ;  
And to beguile the voyage, if thou wilt come  
aboard,  
Till sunset fire the waters the fire-water shall be  
poured.

While clad in softest moccasins the feet of  
the years shall fall ;  
And I will cherish thee, my love, till Time  
shall scalp us all.

My pipe of peace thy frosty scorn has shattered,  
stem and bowl ;  
But a thousand thongs from thy dear hide are  
knotted round my soul.  
Safe from the swoop of tomahawk my dove  
shall ever be ;

And if famine stare us in the face, I'll jerk my  
heart for thee.

So, clad in noiseless moccasins the feet of the  
years shall fall;  
And I will cherish thee, my love, till Time  
shall scalp us all.

## GOLDEN BUTTER.

*Written for the Pot Luck Club.*

WHEN bread goes down and wit goes round,  
And every palate's in a flutter,  
The gastric muse is surely bound  
To sing the praise of golden butter.

Not only in the winter morn,  
When buckwheat pancakes smoke and  
splutter,  
Nor on autumnal ears of corn  
That bathe themselves in golden butter,

But slipping on through History's page,  
Where other unctions clog and clutter,  
And dripping down from age to age,  
Behold the strains of golden butter!

When Jason left the shores of Greece,  
Commander of the Argo cutter,  
He went to find the famous fleece  
That Phrixus took from golden butter.

When miners gathered at the dam  
Above the mill of John A. Sutter,  
He found his old hydraulic ram  
Transformed into a golden butter.

And at our great Centennial rout  
A Western woman deftly cut her  
Clear way to fame by carving out  
A lovely girl in golden butter.

Let oleo and other shams  
Go back into their native gutter,  
While dairy-maids as high-tide clams  
Are happy in their golden butter.

With biscuit light and tea-pot bright,  
The storms without may roar or mutter,  
But we sit calm at candlelight,  
And revel in the golden butter.

In peaceful days or days of strife,  
When bane or bliss is too, too utter,  
We'll grease the jarring wheels of life  
With pretty pats of golden butter.

In days of rain or days of drouth,  
With flowing style or futile stutter,  
While melts it not within our mouth,  
We'll sing the praise of golden butter.



## THE BOHEMIAN'S DREAM.

ALONE in a garret where cobwebs hang thick  
Over walls that display the bare mortar and  
brick,  
Whose windows look down on the roofs of back  
sheds,  
From a height that would dizzy the coolest of  
heads,  
A young author sits by a rickety stand,  
In a broken-backed chair, with a pen in his  
hand,  
And patiently toils, ere the sunlight shall fade,  
To stain the last quire of a ream of white laid.  
The shadows have deepened that hang on the  
wall ;

But the *Finis* is written, the pen is let fall ;  
And, glad of a respite from labors complete,  
His hands and his head press the last written  
sheet.

Sleep comes not alone ; for the goddess of dreams  
Is accustomed to visit this blacker of reams.  
Like the man that sits under a monster balloon,  
And soars o'er the earth half way up to the  
moon,

Now stepping at once into *Fancy's* fair car  
He sails from the dusky old garret afar ;  
And, leaving the world with its practical crowds,  
Such visions as these meet his gaze in the clouds !

*THE DREAM.*

Forty large editions  
Of the thrilling tale ;  
Forty thousand dollars,  
Net proceeds of sale.

Forty smiling critics  
Lavishing their praise ;  
Forty famous florists  
Bidding for the bays.

Forty thousand maidens  
Sitting up at night,  
Poring o'er the volume  
With intense delight.

Forty thousand letters  
From the country sent,  
Blurred by frequent tear-drops,  
Filled with sentiment.

Forty scheming mothers  
Anxious for a match ;  
Forty blushing daughters,  
Each a glorious catch.

Forty generations  
Reverence his name ;  
Forty future ages  
Fortify his fame.

THE REALITY.

Forty dunning letters  
Coming every day ;  
Forty cents for washing,  
Which he can not pay.

Forty jokes malicious  
Cracked by forty wags ;  
Forty pert young misses  
Sneering at his rags.

Forty old companions  
Wondering at his mood ;  
Forty friends officious  
Preaching fortitude.

Forty days of sadness ;  
Forty nights of sorrow ;  
Forty dark forebodings  
Hanging o'er the morrow.

Forty hempen inches,  
Borrowed from a friend ;  
Rafter at the upper,  
Neck at lower end.

Forty earthy spadefuls  
On the green hillside ;  
Forty lines of local,  
Telling how he died.

# WEATHER LYRICS



## NINETY-NINE IN THE SHADE.

- O FOR a lodge in a garden of cucumbers !
  - O for an iceberg or two at control !
- O for a vale that at mid-day the dew cumpers !
  - O for a pleasure-trip up to the pole !
- O for a little one-story thermometer,
  - With nothing but zeroes all ranged in a row !
- O for a big double-barrelled hygrometer,
  - To measure the moisture that rolls from my brow !
- O that this cold world were twenty times colder !
  - (That's irony red hot, it seemeth to me).
- O for a turn of its dreaded cold shoulder !
  - O what a comfort an ague would be !



O for a grotto frost-lined and rill-riven,  
Scooped in the rock under cataract vast !

O for a winter of discontent even !  
O for wet blankets judiciously cast !

O for a soda-fount spouting up boldly  
From every hot lamp-post against the hot sky !  
O for proud maiden to look on me coldly,  
Freezing my soul with a glance of her eye !

Then O for a draught from a cup of cold pizen !  
And O for a through ticket, *via* Coldegrave,  
To the baths of the Styx, where a thick shadow  
lies on  
And deepens the chill of its dark-running  
wave !

## ZERO IN THE SUN.

As rail-tracks shorten in the cold,  
Obedient to Nature's law,  
So shrinks the man of iron mould,  
When these rude winds their weapons draw—  
These "eager airs" of icy breath,  
Whose myriad poniards, piercing, chilling,  
Seem dealing back a vengeful death,  
For cuts of that proverbial shilling.

The fuel-vendors thank their stars  
That Lehigh higher yet must go ;  
And babies cuddle close to Mars,  
Because the Mercury is low ;

And Sunday at the twilight hour,  
Once lit by tinder flames of Venus,  
My flame bewails, with visage sour,  
The coldness that has come between us.

I'd fly to her, I'd break the ice  
By axing like an honest man ;  
But breaking ice is not so nice  
When it means, Fanny, be my Fan !  
When ghosts of frozen smiles benumb  
The loving lips that shiver blueely ;  
And when the cool reply may come :  
" Ask pa,"— and pa is Mr. Cooley.

I'll don my double-worsted hose ;  
I'll pile the grate with embers bright ;  
I'll read my Burns, and toast my toes,  
And sing the songs the skalds indite ;  
Or hie me to some fur-rin shore —  
Fire Island, or a land of geysers,

Or Hottentots, or hellebore —  
To check my chattering incisors ;

Drink ginger-tea as pudding thick,  
Compounded in a red-hot can,  
Stirred with a fire-wood toddy-stick,  
And ladled with a warming-pan,—  
Unless some friendly foe, instead,  
Will hold me over Etna's crater,  
Heap coals of fire upon my head,  
And drop me like a hot potater.

## A RHYME OF THE RAIN.

LIKE a blotch upon a beauty,  
Comes a cloud across the sky ;  
Like an unrelenting duty,  
Fall the rain-drops from on high.  
Like death upon a holiday,  
Like sleigh-ride upon wheels,  
Like jilting on a jolly day,  
Like medicine at meals,  
Sets in a storm preposterous,  
Of every plan the bane :  
Now sullen, and now boisterous,  
Malicious, mean, or roisterous,

But always moist and moisture-ous,  
Forever on the gain,  
And never on the wane,  
Bringing sudden consternation,  
And a long-drawn botheration,  
To the men upon the house-top, and the cattle  
in the plain.  
How it pours, pours, pours,  
In a never-ending sheet!  
How it drives beneath the doors!  
How it soaks the passer's feet!  
How it rattles on the shutter!  
How it rumples up the lawn!  
How 'twill sigh, and moan, and mutter,  
From darkness until dawn! —  
Making human life a burden,  
Making joy a flimsy wile,  
Making bondage seem a guerdon  
In the rainless fields of Egypt, by the clever  
river Nile.

Yet how pleasantly the rain,  
With its delicate refrain,  
May sing away the sultriness of summer day or  
night!

Set the drooping grass a-springing,  
And the robin's throat a-ringing,  
Fill the meadow-lands with verdure, and the  
hills with glistening light!

Or in April, fickle-hearted,  
Ere the chill has quite departed,  
That the frosts, and the snows, and the howl-  
ing winds have brought,

When all the signs of gladness  
Take a sombre tinge of sadness,  
For days and deeds that come no more, and  
dreams that fell to nought!

Then, in half-unwelcome leisure  
'Tis a sort of solemn pleasure  
To sit beside the ingle,  
Or to lie beneath the shingle,

And listen to the patter of the rain, rain, rain,  
To the drip, drip, drip,  
And the patter, patter, patter,  
On the roof, and the shutter, and the pane,  
pane, pane.

But whether night or day-time,  
In harvest-time or play-time,  
And whether pour or patter,  
The early rain or latter  
Reigns over human purpose, and plays with  
human fears —  
Sets mighty armies shouting,  
Sends little Cupid pouting,  
Turns trusting into doubting,  
And triumph into tears.

O! sadly I remember  
One treacherous September,  
When the autumn equinoctial came a week or  
so too soon.



I had started with a cousin,  
For the church, among a dozen  
Maids and matrons who were airing  
The fall styles, and gayly wearing  
The very newest, sweetest thing in bonnets  
'neath the moon.  
And midway of the journey,  
Like a thousand knights in tourney,  
The levelled lances of the rain drove furious at  
our breast ;  
And the fall styles fell and wilted,  
On the dames so proudly kilted,  
And by sudden transformation worse than  
worst became the best.  
Though I now am sere and yellow,  
I was then a valiant fellow,  
And esteemed it more a joy to serve the ladies  
than to live.  
Imagine, then, my feelings,  
'Mid the shrinkings and the squealings,

When my water-proof umbrella proved a sieve,  
sieve, sieve !

When my shiny new umbrella proved a sieve !

What a sorry lot of mortals

Sat within the sacred portals,

In their mermaid millinery looking sad, sad, sad !

Nothing dry except the sermon,

Which discoursed on dew's of Hermon

And the streams that, saith the Scripture, do  
make glad, glad, glad !

So the preacher praised the waters

To those mothers, wives, and daughters,

Every dripping, draggled one of whom was  
mad, mad, mad !

And my bright and handsome cousin —

Sweetest girl among the dozen,

Or among a dozen dozen you might meet  
along the way,

Then a hopeful, sprightly lassie,

Now, I fear, a little *passée*, —

Dates the ruin of her chances from that rainy  
Sabbath-day.

She had spent her last round dollar  
For the bonnet, gloves, and collar,  
That should have proved effective on the smart  
young pulpiteer;  
But he rode home in the carriage  
Of her rival, and their marriage  
Was solemnized (my cousin's word) in less than  
half a year.

But gladly I remember  
One crimson-hued September,  
When we strayed along the hedges and with-  
in the gorgeous wold;  
A merry autumn party  
Of men and maidens hearty,  
Rejoicing in the foliage of scarlet and of gold.  
And ere we thought of turning,  
Or saw a sign of warning,

We heard upon the fallen leaves the footsteps  
of the rain.

Away went rules conventional !

And I, with haste intentional,

Just clapped my good old broad-brim on the  
head of Annie Trayne.

That extemporized umbrella

Threw cold water on a fellow

Who was courting, in a lazy sort of way, Miss  
Annie Trayne ;

While it made me quite a gallant,

And a fine young man of talent,

In the eyes and estimation of the beauteous  
Annie Trayne.

In the dreamy summer haze

Of my far-off boyish days,

I had chased the luring butterfly across the  
grassy plain,

But I never threw my hat

O'er a prize so fair as that

When it sheltered, caught, and gave me, the  
lovely Annie Trayne.

And I've blessed that gentle rain

Again and yet again,

For the flowers it set blooming in my life :

For the crimson and the gold

That adorn the little fold

Where I find an autumn shelter with my wife.

THE END.













